

## **Brandon's 80th Legislative Brainstorm and random commentary**

### **• Minimum Wage -**

- This is a great wedge issue with strong arguments and talking points that are hard to argue against and resonate (polls extremely well) with the middle and lower income folks.
- **Legislative--**
  - Our Bill, and possible Amendments onto anything to do with Enterprise fund, etc, must pay certain fair wage to receive state finding,
- **Public Opinion Strategy --**
  - **Early session press conference--** Maybe a big press conference will have a number of D's, advocates, religious groups, etc on the capitol steps at the beginning of session. The minimum wage advocates (AFLCIO, CPPPP, etc) are interested in organizing a pretty good event, clergy, top economic experts, labor, etc.. Senate Dems have shown interest, and a number of Min wage House bills have been filed.
  - **OP-ED --** from advocates, from economists experts on the rising income gaps and the drop in buying power
  - **We need the advocates to work on some rural Republicans**
  - Maybe get John Edwards group down here.

### **• HIGHER ED -- KB**

- **Tuition Deregulation/Texas Grants funding Increase --** Effort last session got you out in front on this and Texas grants is your baby. An issue that will again resonate with middle and lower class families trying to send their kids to college, and folks who understand that for a strong economy, we are going to need to invest in an educated workforce
  - **Legislative Ideas--**
    - from Dick Levine from CPPP on indigent defense endowment fund (like the Tobacco settlement). Couldn't we use it here, for Texas GRANTS as well?
    - Tuition Dereg Bills-- various
    - Amendments on to other proposed dereg bills
- **Strategy**



- **Update JW's book form last session and work on appropriation for TX GRants**
- **Press Conference** -- I think an op-ed and Press conference with college students highlighting the increasing cost of college/decreasing grant money available, and the need for greater investment in higher ed as an investment in our future workforce and economy would be good.
- **OP-EDS** - maybe from you, maybe from Student Body presidents (if they will do it) on the increasing struggle with the costs of tuition and how Texas GRANTS have helped, and could help more.
- **Student Loan Forgiveness for teachers in TX** -- you ask about this bill some months ago. We have some research. Could tie it to teachers who agree to teach in Math or Science for certain number of years
- **Legacy Admissions** --
- **Energy/Enviro Issues** -- These issues are growing in significance and moving into the mainstream of public support. Whether its the skyrocketing energy prices for gas, or electric bills that have come with Deregulation, or the outcry around the state on the coal plants, folks seem to get that something needs to be done about energy issues. There is no one else in the Senate who has taken the lead in this area, and I think that your position on the NCEP gives you a position of respect, as well as access to resources, that could make you a major player in a policy area that is only going to grow in significance in the years to come. If you stay away from the extremes, and propose reasonable, workable solutions --which will still be characterized as extreme in this state-- you could carve out a respectable niche here.
  - **Clean Cars Bill**
    - cleans the air and saves Texans money at the gas pump. What else can you ask for?
    - Need to get advocates and segments of the business community to keep the pressure on.
    - **OP-EDS** -- from the advocates on each of the energy/enviro issues you have, but I think one op-ed from you on the importance of a smart, clean, and efficient energy plan for the future of Texas on all the bills you file.
  - **Restoration of systems benefit fund (affordable energy)**
    - You (or have us) may want to reach out and work w/ Rep Turner on this. He has been out front. You will get a good deal of support in your district on this. We get a number of complaints.
  - **Dirty Coal Plant Moratorium**--
    - ruling on Perry's fast tracking executive order in a couple of weeks. Might be good time for press conference with all the



Mayors and D's and R's (many R's signed on to a letter on the House side asking TCEQ to take pause) , Medical Community, and some grassroots, who have come out against this publicly.

Advocates are drafting language for a Resolution--- you will need one as well as a bill, a bill will take effect too late.

- May ask the Hewlett Foundation people (from NCEP) to send down experts and money to help with an effort
- Advocates and papers would pump out the op-eds and editorials for you.

- **Other Bills-** Californian Carbon Cap and Trade bill (the one Swartzenager got all the props for),
- **Energy Efficiency measures --** save public money and create jobs. Energy efficient buildings, Increased state Renewable energy investment, maybe something like discounted tolls and HOV access for efficient vehicles, Southern Crushed Concrete, etc
- **Amendments -- All enterprise fund projects must build energy efficient/green buildings, state fleets use certain amount of hybrids, etc.**
- **China has higher fuel efficiency standards than US**

## • **Health Care --**

- **Walmart --Fair Share Health Care**
  - Requires companies with over a certain number of employees to invest over a minimum threshold towards health insurance. Good issue. Big national campaign on this. Passed in Maryland and a couple other states.
  - Used as big wedge issue around the country
  - Strategy if pursue? Where is HEB and other big folks on this?
- **CHIP -** Restoration, etc...AH, Coleman ...
- **Stem Cell---** ?
- **Prescription Drugs --** we need to get the language for the bill that is Constitutional, not the one from last session
  - contact Rep. Hochberg's office to see if are interested again
- **Smoking Ban -** everything already underway here, but I would like to see the advocates take the lead more with op-eds, working R's, etc.
  - Bill to tie future cigarette tax increases must go to health care?

## • **Sales Tax Holiday Expansion**

- **Predatory Lending Legislation** -- some new good legislation passed in other states. Rick brought this up in our meeting
- **Sudan Divestment** -- hard for folks to argue against on the merits, but that usually doesn't stop them
- **Veteran Spouse and Children Bills** - Rick had some good ideas here
- **Journalist Privilege** -- get JW and the media folks together for a game plan.
- **Protecting Democracy --Campaign Contribution Limits, Voting Rights Legislation**
  - **Campaign Contributions** -- Your bill with Strama. I'm not really in the loop on this
  - **Voting Rights** -- Waiting to see exactly what Deece and his folks have, but I think we need something on offense to counter the inevitability that we will have to play defense on voter ID bill again.
    - Paper trail on voting machines, Election Day Registration, Time off for elections have been filed by Rep. Anchia on the House side.
- **Insurance** -- Not my area of expertise, but there seem to be some decent items on the chart, like the credit scoring bill, dead peasants, etc
- **Casino Gaming?**
- **Parks Funding** --
- **Criminal Justice Issues**
  - **Indigent Defense** --
    - Possibility of creating an endowment from the surplus from the establishment of Pub Defenders offices--a la tobacco fund--offered by Dick Levigne. Counties would love this, and it create a heck of a incentive for them to create public defender systems.
    - Capital State Public Defender -- a specialized PD like exists in many other states is first step toward pub defenders offices across stae. Backed by the bi-partisan Texas Task Force on Indigent Defense --it's part of their legislative strategic plan
    - **\$65 Bar fee for Indigent Legal Services** -- State Bar will actually support this time around